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DOCUMENTS

Letters of General Thomas Williams, 1862.

THE following letters have several claims to special interest. They are continuous in character, they describe important phases of Civil War experience, and they were written by a man not only exceedingly expert in military science but who was a wonderfully pure and patriotic character. Perhaps a brief synopsis of his career should introduce the letters, as, while he enjoyed a very great professional fame among those best qualified to judge, he was not widely known nor well understood by the public.

Thomas Williams was born at Albany, New York, January 16, 1815. His father, Captain John R. Williams, was a native and well-known citizen of Detroit, in the Territory of Michigan, who was temporarily residing in Albany on account of the War of 1812, having been made prisoner in Hull's surrender, and paroled. John R. Williams returned to Detroit in 1816, where his son Thomas received his early education. The youth showed his first military bias in the Black Hawk War, where he served as a trumpeter, his father being in command of a division of Michigan troops. This determined his future career, and he was admitted to West Point in 1833 as a cadet, graduating in 1837 with Hooker, Sedgwick, Van Dorn and other generals of the Civil War.

His field service began immediately on graduation as second lieutenant in the Fourth Artillery, in the closing campaigns of the Florida War. In 1839 he was in instruction camp at Trenton, New Jersey, shortly afterward at Detroit, and then instructor at West Point. He went to the Mexican War as first lieutenant and aide-de-camp to General Scott, beginning with the siege of Vera Cruz, where he had charge of a battery. He was in all the heavy actions which followed in the advance to Mexico and the siege and capture of the city, except Molino del Rey, and was brevetted both captain and major for gallant and meritorious conduct. He became captain, Fourth Artillery, in 1850, serving at Fort Columbus, New York Harbor, and took command at Fort Mackinac in 1852. While there he was married to Miss Mary Neosho Bailey, daughter of Dr. Joseph H. Bailey, U.S.A., and to her these letters were written. The wife

was fully able to enter into the military tone of the letters, as she grew up in an atmosphere of such affairs.

In 1856 Major Williams joined General Harney's Florida expedition and spent a year or more in the Everglades, or their neighborhood, a very trying service. Then he was transferred to Leavenworth, and began early in 1858 a long march across the plains in support of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston's Utah expedition. Reaching Laramie, he found that Johnston had already been successful, and so went into camp for the winter at the Cheyenne Pass, now in Wyoming. Then followed another long march to Fort Randall on the Upper Missouri, and then a short leave.

Major Williams returned to duty in April, 1860, and spent the trying year that followed at Fort Monroe, Virginia, engaged in the Artillery School. During the opening months of the Civil War he was occupied with recruiting the new Fifth Artillery and with duties of inspection, there and in Pennsylvania, and with the instruction of volunteers at Harrisburg. His commission as major in the new Fifth came in June, 1861, and that of brigadier-general of volunteers in September. From October, 1861, to the beginning of March, 1862, he was in command at Hatteras Inlet. He was then assigned to General Butler's Mississippi expedition. The letters here printed begin with the arrival of that expedition in the neighborhood of Ship Island.

Subsequent events can be learned fairly well from the letters. The few days preceding his death, which are not described in the letters, may be filled in by saying that he was constantly on the alert against an expected attack, but always calm and a tower of strength to his men, who never ceased to marvel at his coolness in danger. On Sunday, August 3, 1862, he received the Holy Communion in the Episcopal church in Baton Rouge. On Monday evening he took all his field officers and battery commanders around his position and over the field of the impending conflict. By four o'clock the following morning his little force of invalids was engaged in a desperate struggle with two divisions of the Confederate Army, whose attacks continued until after ten o'clock. The fighting was exceedingly heavy and at close range, and severe losses were suffered among the ranking officers of the Confederate Army.

General Williams entered the action with a hastily improvised staff, as his own selected staff, all but one, were dead or absent on account of sickness. He was forced therefore to be often exposed, and after losing two horses shot under him was himself killed, leading the Twenty-first Indiana Regiment in a bayonet charge. The

odds against him had been so severe that it is no small glory that he held the town and saved his small command.

He had an extraordinary devotion to discipline as the ground of a soldier's character, and many, especially among the volunteers, had thought him too severe. But he was himself most rigorously disciplined, and those whom he had trained certainly afterward thoroughly justified their teacher and leader. With all this, his heart was extraordinarily kind, and his manners so gracious and courtly that old people speak of him to this day as the fine flower of chivalry.

The South had few good words to say of many of our leaders, but it has recorded in its histories that it greatly respected and admired him for his virtues and his humanity. His own commander described him in General Orders as "the true friend, the gallant gentleman, the pure patriot and victorious hero, and the devoted Christian. All and more went out when Williams died. . . . His virtues we cannot exceed; his example we may emulate."

General Williams was survived by a widow and four children. The youngest son soon followed him. The rest are still living.¹

The letters have been very slightly abridged by omissions, which are marked. Matters of purely family interest were often too trivial and sometimes too sacred for publication.

G. MOTT WILLIAMS.

March 12, 1862. *Transport Constitution*, at sea.

This is our 6th day out from Ft. Monroe, and we think ourselves at this writing three hours from Ship Island, our supposed destination. The supposition will probably be changed into certainty, should I meet Gen'l Butler, as I expect to, at Ship Island. Ship Island is east and north of the mouth of the Mississippi, between New Orleans and Mobile. We have already a force of about 4000 men at Ship Island, and my force on board of this ship is about 3000. What additional force Gen'l Butler may have with him we are not informed. We learn, however, from rumour, that the entire force of his expedition numbers 15,000, which force will probably be divided into three brigades of 5000 each. Gen. Phelps to command one brigade, myself another, and who will command the third I don't know. The trip thus far has been rapid and agreeable. A succession of so many days of clear sky and smooth sea as we have had is not common. And then, the temperature, that of late spring or summer. Too hot yesterday for winter clothing. The shower of last night and the early morning has however cooled the air to about 70—very pleasant. I can hardly imagine a finer ship than this. So large, well furnished, so swift and so well provided with creature comforts. Perfectly clean, for this is only her third trip since she was launched and every department complete—pantry, store rooms, ice

¹ To one of General Williams's sons, the Bishop of Marquette, we are indebted for permission to print these letters.—ED.

house, kitchen, etc. She cost \$460,000 and receives from Gov't \$2500 a day for carrying troops, feeding the officers and providing the men with coffee, morning and night, and cooking their rations. The table cloths and knives and forks clean and white: and my table for self and staff a separate one, as good as any man could wish. An asst Adj. Gen'l, a surgeon, a qrmaster, a commissary and two aides de camp, a topographical officer, Lt. Turnbull of the army, on his way to join Gen. Butler, is also of our table.

The men are of better quality physically than any I have yet seen, and the officers highly respectable. Thus far, in this calamitous war, our western regiments are the only ones which have shown any proper spirit in the fight, and with the right spirit they, no doubt, excel the eastern regiments in knowledge of arms and aptitude for war. I hope Gen'l Butler will permanently assign those with me to my brigade. I understand, they desire it themselves. It is a coincidence, is it not, that I, a western man, ordered from a sand spit on the Hatteras coast to a sand spit near the mouth of the Mississippi should meet with and take command of the only western reg'ts assigned to the Expedition. I hope it promises good fortune. Success for me with western troops would have a completeness, it seems to me, that it could not have with eastern. But, with all supposed auxiliaries in men and material, I yet look to the blessing of Providence, and count on no success without. I ask His blessing morning and night, and depend not a little on the prayers of my wife. If I ever doubted the efficacy of prayer, I no longer doubt. The greatest results in war, as in the general affairs of nations are in His hand, and the greatest and best and bravest men have been accustomed to invoke his help.

15 min. to 6 P. M. We have arrived at Ship Island and I've just returned from shore, having selected a camping ground for the three regts. The place is not unlike Hatteras. Gen Butler not arrived. I shall commence to disembark early tomorrow morning.

March 12, 9.15 P. M. Steamship *Constitution*, OFF SHIP ISLAND.

Hatteras Island is as like Ship Island as two peas, and coming from one to the other reminds me of the saying of jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. But Papa hopes we'll be able to get to the main land, only 12 miles off. Rumour says the Secessionists are working hard to make New Orleans impregnable, but also that our great success at Fort Donaldson has greatly dispirited them. Papa brought with him from Ft. Monroe a regiment from Michigan, one from Wisconsin and one from Indiana. They are large, strong, active men and look brave.

March 14, 1862. Steam Transport *Constitution*.

The work of disembarking is nearly completed, and I expect to be ashore this evening and in a tent. Gen. Butler, hourly expected, is not yet arrived. Till his arrival ther'll be no movement of the land forces, though I believe it is or was contemplated to-day to try our mortar vessels at Forts Pike and Jackson—the former near the passage into Lake Ponchartrain, and the latter just up the Mississippi. Without more knowledge on the subject than my neighbors, I only conjecture that the Expedition is designed for New Orleans. That we shall meet with determined resistance is probable, I think also that our success is probable. The troops here are in good spirits and anxious to go for-

ward, and I think that both navy and army are impressed with the importance to the cause of a decided success, in an enterprise which once baffled the best British troops—badly commanded. My former subaltern, Capt Kensell, is Gen. Butler's chief of Artillery and is now with Gen. Butler on his way here. Kensell is very partial to his former Captain and, I understand, seconded as much as in his power Gen. Butler's determination to get me.

While on that Hatteras sandbank I cogitated a good deal over a tactical formation for troops which would enable them to act most effectively and with the utmost rapidity in battle, and having succeeded, as I think, I sent before I left Hatteras, a copy to the Sec'y of War, asking for it a week's trial by some of Gen. McClellan batallions. It gave great satisfaction to my colonels at Hatteras, and takes well with the military here. I have great hopes from it, *great* hopes that it will bring success to our arms. So, if not directly, I hope to do something indirectly for victory. Whitney, I believe never cleaned cotton himself, but he invented the gin. So if I do not win victories, I may enable others to do so.

March 24, 1862.

A note from Gen. Butler's Adj. Gen'l has just informed me that a mail goes north from this at two o'clock this afternoon.

Gen. Butler, detained by an accident to his vessel, arrived here from Port Royal only three days ago. By this time we are possessed of some positive idea concerning the destination and objects of the Expedition. All the troops expected are not yet here. We have now about 13,000 and there are some 4000 to come. The force here has been divided into 3 brigades, mine, the 2d brigade, consists of the 4th Wisconsin, 6th Michigan, 21st Indiana, 26th and 30th Massachusetts, a Wisconsin battery, a Massachusetts battery and a company of cavalry, and is considered the best brigade of the three, and being so, will probably be the first to start for the main land. My brigade is chiefly considered the best, because it contains the only Western Regiments in the Expedition, and the Western men, as yet, have been the only troops on our side who have showed prowess and spirit.

I am of course greatly interested and my time much occupied with the work of preparation. Men have not only to be drilled, but equipments looked to, and their daily and prospective wants anticipated. Having done all I can for success, I shall invoke and do daily ask for the blessing of Providence, for the cause of my country.

This is indeed an isolated place, hard to get to and hard to get from. In the matter of mails, and news from the States, one would not be greatly worse off in Kamschatka. My tent is on the north beach of Ship Island, looking out on the Gulf and looking towards you. The weather changeable, ranging from 70 to 50. and Buffalo robes as comfortable and necessary as in Newburgh, in tents without board floors.

The sand about us, inside of my tent and out, is as white, nearly, as this paper, and so fine that the wind blows it everywhere, not respecting eyes, ears, hair, bread, butter, or the pot on the fire. I think sometimes that sand may have its uses in the processes of digestion and in sharpening the teeth. Don't the hens use sand to aid the digestion?

I have been most fortunate in the selection of my staff of seven gentlemen. We have accordingly a most agreeable mess, perfect harmony, good will and good nature. All efficient, too, in their respective

duties. A good staff is not only essential to a commander in the details of business, but can and must greatly assist to establish agreeable relations between himself and his troops. So far, there has not been a word of reproof on my part, or of complaint on theirs. And the regiments, moreover, as I am informed, would have selected me for their commander, if they had had the choice. Now this is a good beginning, is it not?

I may move in 5 days, or not in 10 or 15. But I will always write when opportunity offers all about myself and as much about our doings or intentions as may be proper to commit to a private letter.

March 29, 1862. Saturday, SHIP ISLAND, MISS.

This morning Gen. Butler sent for me to consult about the reg'ts best fitted, by discipline and instruction, to lead our advance toward the Mississippi, and about the necessary outfit in ammunition, clothing and subsistence stores for a movement. The result was that we're to begin to embark six reg'ts and two batteries tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock, and should the weather not be unfavorable, all six will probably be on board their respective transports before night.

I go with Gen'l Butler, the six regiments and two batteries constituting my brigade. The remaining troops on the Island to follow as soon as they can get transportation. We are to co-operate with the navy, who, no doubt, will do their part and more than their part if they can. The land and naval portion of the forces are emulous of each other, and all, I think, look for satisfactory results. In point of numbers, my brigade greatly exceeds our divisions in the old army, and would there be a Major General's command. John and Mott would feel quite martial if they could see papa's brigade on drill or review. They look well and soldierly and move well. I don't believe the other side have any as good. And besides, having our quarrel just, we are thrice armed. Armed also I trust with the Arm that gives all victory and all good.

Daily, in the morning and at night I ask His blessing for the glory and success of my country's efforts to conquer the restoration of the Union, and bring back peace and prosperity. And I pray that the whole country may recognize in such success and acknowledge therein in word and in deed the power and boundless mercy of God. Regarding the subject from a mere political point of view, I do not doubt that the ordeal the country's now passing through will tend to give us the nationality we lack, and restore through the alternations of hope and despondency, success and disaster, the virtue, public and private, and the love of country for which our sires of the first revolution were so distinguished.

The chastisements and chastenings of eternal wisdom and mercy can never fail of their purpose.

I wish I could afford to run a mail steamer to the great city of Gotham. Last dates received at Fort Monroe were to the 5th of March. Nearly a month ago, long enough, too long. So long, it seems almost a year. Meanwhile, how many things are happening at home! What great events too of the highest interest to our country may be transpiring! It cannot all be success, of course. War is never all on one side. It is a game of varying fortune, and apparently necessarily so to the side, even, that finally prevails, in order to beget the stronger interest and persistence.

We have a rumour that the rebel iron clad steamer *Merrimac* made sad work of the frigates *Cumberland* and *Congress* lately in Hampton Roads. The contest was too unequal between impervious iron and destructible wood, and between the locomotive power of steam and sail. But it will work best for us in the end. The North has not yet waked up thoroughly to this war, and it seems that success lulls them into the feeling of security, which their knowledge of superior power is so apt to do. Whips and spurs are a help to us. The rumour also is that we have Manassas, and that there's lately been a great success for our arms in Arkansas. I don't know where the rumours come from, they appear to be in the air: the birds bring them, I suppose. Rumour says, too, that we have No. 10 Island near Columbus, and the last, of this evening, that we have New Orleans. Some truth there must be in all this rumour. The birds, I hope are not against us, though many charming young women with voices like birds are. How do you account for the secession proclivities of the sex? But for the women, many a man would have remained true to the flag he's now in arms against. Is it that statesman and soldiers have not sufficiently acknowledged their power and they're determined to make them?

SHIP ISLAND, In Camp on North Beach. April 11, 1862.

Not embarked yet. Movements are unavoidably uncertain that wait on wind, wave, steam, coal, water, provision and the much careful and laborious preparation of our Navy friends. The time expended has not however been without profit to us or them, and we're certainly nearer our destination than we were.

Such a sand storm as is prevailing—that is, a furious wind storm that drives the sand into everything we eat, drives it, like so much fine snow, tingling in our faces, stopping eyes, ears and nose, making a “feller” sneeze. Don't object to sneezing, for they say it's good luck to sneeze. We sneezed a good deal at Vera Cruz from the same cause. Having come bravely out of that—indeed all the better for it—we trust to come bravely out of this, perhaps like that at Vera Cruz, from the preliminary ordeal to great and complete success.

My poor country! Methinks, I read in the 80th Psalm matter strangely applicable to our national beginnings, to our growth, prosperity and our present divided state and the attitude of France and England toward us. Is not the parallel striking? So much so do I think it, that it is often my morning and evening prayer.

Not a letter has come to me from you since leaving Fort Monroe, March 6. Our newspapers are far behind the times. A chance ship comes in occasionally with news we heard at Old Point before leaving. Not quite so bad as this. We have heard of McClellan's advance, the rebel abandonment of Manassas, etc., but that is the sum of our news to this date. Rumours of the capture of I'd No. 10. No doubt we shall take it. I mean our forces under Gen. Halleck. Probably taken by this time and possibly Richmond Va. by McClellan. Oh, how I hope and pray we shall strike some blow in the work of conquering peace and union, we of the Expedition of the Mississippi.

April 12, 11 A. M. The wind and sand storm of yesterday became last night a furious rain and thunder and lightning storm, upsetting and deluging tents and, worse than all, killing three men near me in one of the reg'ts of my brigade (31st Massachusetts), by lightning

stroke, wounding more or less some 11 others in the same guard tent. At this writing the sky is bright, the sea calm, and all the elements in repose, and but for the sound of musketry and bugle and drum, one might imagine himself alone in the world:—out of the world on a fishing excursion by himself on this sand bank. There's pretty good fishing here, fishing by net and line.

April 15th. At last embarked. Here I am on board of the *Great Republic*, with three regiments of my brigade, our destination the Southwest pass of the Mississippi. The remaining reg'ts of my brigade are on board the *Mississippi* with Gen. Butler and staff. The whole force embarked will be 8 regiments and some three batteries of artillery, a company of sappers and miners, and a company of dismounted cavalry, in all, say, rather less than 7000 men. One of these days, at a fitting time, 7000 or 8000 more will probably follow. Five of the 8 regts, 2 batteries and the company of cavalry belong to my brigade. Gen. Phelps commands the remaining three reg'ts. My brigade is the 2d, his is the first. But my brigade leads, in consequence, I think, of the good account our western troops elsewhere have given of themselves.

April 16. Still off Ship Island waiting the final orders to sail, expected to be given this afternoon. My ship, the *Great Republic* (good and great name, isn't it, to be entrusted to one's keeping), is to be towed by the U. S. armed steamer *Jackson*. *Jackson* and the *Great Republic*! Is not this all a good omen? If *Jackson* won at New Orleans for the *Great Republic*, ought not the two combined also to win at New Orleans? The navy are in great force and expect to be able to reduce Forts Jackson and St. Philip, chiefly by the use of mortar fire, for which they are abundantly provided. If one shell in 10 falls within the limits for which they are intended, it appears to me that those forts must fall. What the land force will be able to do in reducing the forts can not now be foreseen.

The rebels have stretched a formidable system of chains across the river above Forts Jackson and St. Philip, buoyed up on five vessels securely anchored. The navy propose to cut this chain, and are, they say, furnished with the experts and machinery that can do it. The forts taken or passed, and New Orleans is ours.

My ship the *Great Republic* is famous for the part she played in the Crimean War as a transport of French troops. Conspicuous I say, because of her great proportions and her name, which, alas for the change which has since taken place, was then in such striking harmony with her great proportions. The *Great Republic* carried 3000 French troops at one time from Marseilles to the harbor of Kamiesh in the Crimea. They were on the passage 24 days. We expect to be on our passage hardly more than twice as many hours; may be more, may be less.

Rumours give us Norfolk and lose us Corinth and Island No. 10. But rumours are so plenty and so contradictory that we attach little importance to them. There is a rumour, which if it should ever prevail, I'd like greatly to come true, and that is that we have New Orleans. New Orleans *must* belong to the Union. The capture of New Orleans would tend as much, and perhaps more than any other success, to the restoration of union and peace. This is a commercial and political necessity to the Union States on the banks of the Mississippi, and a political necessity to the whole country. Should we

succeed, my loss in not taking part in the capture of Newberne need not trouble me. In truth, without New Orleans it will not trouble me. Newberne is very well as far as it goes. But it is but the first step towards the results contemplated in organizing the Burnside Expedition. Let us take New Orleans and you'll see.

The orders are that we sail at 3 P. M. today. It's now 15 min. to 1.

Transport Ship *Great Republic*, OFF SOUTHWEST PASS OF MISS.

April 25, 1862.

Arriving here on the 19th we are still here, but leave probably tomorrow at day light for some point near the Quarantine Ground, some 10 miles above Forts Jackson and St. Philip. These forts, having been passed by the fleet, are not only cut off and rendered valueless as a protection to New Orleans, but are also cut off from supplies, rendering their surrender without further attack a simple question of time. We learn this evening that they offered to surrender *conditionally* to the fleet, but were told the surrender must be unconditional. Thus far the navy have had the good fortune to do all that has been done, and the report is they're now on their way to New Orleans, whether to be stopped or not by intervening obstacles in the matter of gunboats, rams, fire rafts and batteries, it's impossible to say. But that the land forces will before long find land enough to co-operate, I have no doubt. Such is the purpose of our contemplated movement tomorrow on the seaside of Fort St. Philip and the Quarantine ground. I have with me three reg'ts on board this ship, and another reg't on board the Steam Transport *Matanzas*, which is to assist our sails with her steam towing powers. Two other reg'ts belonging to my brigade are in advance with Gen. Butler, having left at daylight this morning.

Our ship, the *Great Republic*, the largest sailing ship in the world, is admirable as a transport, with the single exception that her great size and great draft of water make her difficult to handle on a coast, so studded with bars and shoals as this is. Three vessels capable each of carrying a single reg't would have been better for *despatch*—that all important element of success in military operations. Sails, moreover, are too slow and uncertain for these days whether the vessel be large or small. The introduction of steam has affected as much for locomotion by sea, as ironclad sides have for purposes of offence and defence in war by sea. The scales of success will be most apt to incline to the side which has the steam or iron sides. I allude to combined land and water expeditions. That side will be the side which has most money. Money is called the sinews of war—and I suppose the enterprise and skill and daring which put the sinews in motion may be called Mars' nervous system.

This afternoon at 3, I had an agreeable call from Capt. Peardy of a British Steam frigate lying near us. A travelled, liberal minded gentleman, and I doubt not a good sailor. He passed an hour with us over a glass of sherry and ginger nuts. As he came over the side of the ship, he was received by Capt. Hoffman, the guard saluted, and the band played "God save the Queen." I rec'd him near the stern of the ship, and after a few moments chat conducted him to the cabin. The conversation was of course largely taken up with war topics; soldiers, sailors, ships, forts, cannon, etc. He told us he brought out in his ship to Canada two battalions of Guards; that there was plenty of room for

them, for the Guard being picked troops are seldom crowded as troops generally are that are transported by sea. Speaking of the Guards, I told him this anecdote: of a Colo. Somebody from New York who went to Montreal with letters to Sir James McDonald, and was invited to be present at a review of several battalions of the Guards. As they were passing in review, Sir James said "Fine looking troops, Colonel". The Colonel assented. Sir James continued, "They should be fine looking, for they're picked out of the whole British army". "How do ye think they'd look in the States, Colonel?" "Not so well as they do here, Sir James." "How so?" said Sir James. "Why", said the Colonel, "they'd be without *arms*". "Ah", said Sir James, "that's well said, I like that." The colonel's ready wit won the heart of the Waterloo veteran. A gold snuff box presented to the Duke of Wellington, to be by him presented to the bravest man in the British army, was given by the great Duke to Lt. Gen. Sir James McDonald, who was at the Battle of Waterloo a Captain in the Guards, and who, with the assistance of a sergeant, closed the gate of the Chateau of Huegemont at the moment when the French assaulting column was about to enter. This timely and gallant act saved the position to the British, and ultimately won the battle of Waterloo. I recollect to have met Sir James McDonald at West Point, in the summer of 43 or 44.

Transport ship *Great Republic*, OFF PASS A LOUÏTRE,
April 26, 1862.

We got fairly under weigh at a quarter to ten this morning in tow of Steamer *Matanzas*, in order to overtake Gen. Butler who had preceded me with two regts of my brigade, to the quarantine ground below New Orleans. We had hardly been under weigh 20 minutes, when there was a cry of "man overboard" and a rush to the side of the ship. It proved to be one of the crew, who fell from the vessel while engaged about the anchor. The poor fellow never rose above the surface, and was seen for a moment only under the surface, as if in the act of swimming. Ropes and life preservers were thrown him in vain. I was told on enquiry that he could not swim. Swimming indeed might not have saved him, for at the rate the ship was going, he must have been left far behind before a boat could have gone to his assistance. It's a startling cry, that of "man overboard!!" Poor fellow!

April 27. A quarter after 8 A. M. arrived off the north point of Sable Island, was signalled from the steamer *Mississippi*, Gen. Butler's ship, to come to anchor. Found upon our arrival, that part of the 26th Massachusetts regt had been landed at the Quarantine Ground some 7 miles above Ft. St. Philip. Tomorrow the disembarkation of the other regiments will follow, should the rebels fail to surrender the forts.

I read today a letter, dated April 24, from Commodore Farragut to Gen. Butler, saying that the fleet had sunk the ram *Manassas* and destroyed 11 rebel gunboats, and that he was about to continue up the river to N. Orleans. We learn this morning that the Commodore is before N. Orleans, and that the Mayor of N. Orleans, a Union man, was on board the flagship, making terms for the surrender of the city. The rebel forces in Fts. Jackson and St. Philip can hardly escape capture. They may put it off, but with what benefit to themselves, I cannot see.

Gen. Lovell, late Lieut 4th Art'y, and Gen. Duncan, late Lieut 3d

art'y, are both said to be in Fort Jackson. I'd rather all the others should escape than lose the two generals. Lovell, especially, who, at the time he went South was in office in New York as an asst Street Commissioner. If my recollection serves me, he plotted treason and held on to office until after the disaster of Bull Run. Lovell is the son of Dr. Lovell, Dr. Lawson's predecessor in the office of Surgeon Gen'l of the army, was born in Washington, but both father and mother, I believe, were from Massachusetts. Both have been dead several years. He was associated with the filibustering schemes of Gen. Quitman and other leading southern men towards Cuba and Central America, and in the latter is understood to have sold his services for \$10,000. He embarked in this rebellion as a speculation, no doubt, which is likely, happily for the right, to be as barren of gain to himself and coadjutors as the filibustering projects. So perish the wrong and the wrongdoer forever. And so will he fail and perish forever, if we as a people repent and pray. Calamity will bless us more than the prosperity has cursed us, if it restore the nation's integrity to the standard of the days of Washington. If Calamity will do this let us all pray for that measure of it. Let us pray to be corrected, but not in anger, lest we be consumed.

April 28. At Quarantine Ground, 65 miles below New Orleans—arrived at 10½ P. M. in row boats accompanied by 2 companies of 4th Wisconsin regt and 1 company of Indians. Found Gen. Butler had gone to New Orleans and found Colo. Jones with 26th Mass. reg't in charge of the Quarantine premises. I came here by order of Gen. Butler to assume command so as to regulate, or rather prevent the Colo. and a Lt. of Engineers from falling out. The remainder of the troops, including the remaining regts of my brigade, I directed to come to New Orleans by way of the Passes.

April 29. Gen. Butler arrived from New Orleans announcing the surrender of the city and all the Forts, and that the rebel troops under Gen. Lovell had all left post haste for Corinth. We occupy New Orleans as soon as our steamers can take us there. Some have already started. The 26th Mass. regt occupy this point (Quarantine Ground), a post across the river, and Forts St. Philip and Jackson. Gen. Butler brings word that the rebels say they're going to try another battle near Corinth, in which, if failing, they intend to give up rebelling. So mote it be, that they be again disastrously beaten, and at last into submission to good government, into law, loyalty and order.

April 30, 1862. QUARANTINE GROUND, 6.10 A. M.

I'm just informed that a mail goes from this direct to New York. We are still at Quarantine, but our position is a locomotive one. Not many hours more, and it is hoped we shall occupy N. Orleans. Some vessels of the Navy are now holding it in subjection with their guns. The population, they tell us, is violently secession, and, what is worse, are under the rule of a mob. Rigid military rule is what the city wants to restore order, protection and prosperity. This will be done, and acts of mob violence will be repressed by military force. Gen. Butler is sitting at the same table with me writing his dispatches to the War Dep't. They are to go by this mail.

The success of the Navy is something new in the annals of war. But the public will probably confound the ability of steam vessels of

war to *pass* forts, thus avoiding the fire of their guns, and the ability to contend with them. The forts on the Mississippi defended the approach to New Orleans and when passed, New Orleans was, of course, obliged to fall. Had the rebels been able to block up the passage by rafts or otherwise, so as to keep the war vessels under the fire of the forts' guns, the vessels must have been destroyed. Luckily for us, the great depth and great current and width of the Mississippi rendered the stoppage of the river by rafts or otherwise impossible to the rebels and perhaps impossible in fact.

At any rate the success of the navy is great, providential, for there is only about 100 killed and wounded. I believe the last battle at Corinth, a land battle, cost us some thousands.

But there is this significant fact in regard to the rebel defence of Forts Jackson and St. Philip, that their troops positively mutinied and refused to continue at the guns, then left the forts in a body, leaving their officers behind, and spiking the guns that bore on their retreat. However, the forts are still, notwithstanding the fire of the vessels, in good defensible condition, and their surrender was no doubt hastened by many days, by a movement of the land troops in row boats, on their rear, cutting them off from all supplies. After reaching New Orleans we shall probably endeavor to get up beyond Baton Rouge, or as far as the point of the Red River's entrance into the Mississippi. The purpose of this is to cut off supplies and make a demonstration in favor of Gen. Buell.

NEW ORLEANS, LA., May 1, 1862.

Leaving Quarantine Ground, 65 to 70 miles below this, 2 o'clock this morning, we arrived off the city at 12 M. and came to anchor at 12.30, thus having made the passage of 70 miles against a 5 mile current in about 10 hours. Myself and staff were on board the steam transport *Mississippi*, with Gen. Butler.

By 6 o'clock this evening, two reg'ts of my brigade, the 4th Wisconsin and 31st Massachusetts, and 4 pieces of artillery were landed, and amidst a dense crowd of disaffected, marched and took quarters at the Custom House. Muskets and art'y loaded and ready to meet force with force. The city has a look of utter desertion, by everybody but the rabble, not a window, door or shop open of any sort; not a vessel along the whole levee. Having broken open one of the doors of the Custom House, the reg'ts entered and were quartered, and myself and staff also took lodgings here.

I occupy the private office of the late U. S. Collector, for office and lodgings. Sofa, chairs, desks, tables—handsome French furniture, a handsome carpet, curtains, maps, clock, etc., complete the furniture of this airy handsome room. We take our meals at a French restaurant, very expensive, \$3 to \$5 a day.

May 2. I enclose with this Gen. Butler's Proclamation to the inhabitants of New Orleans, and people of Louisiana. Before its publication, the Gen'l invited the Mayor and Common Council of the City, and Mr. Pierre Soule, late Senator of the United States, to meet him at the Gen'l's lodgings at the St. Charles Hotel. The Proclamation was read to them. At first Mr. Soule and the Common Council objected to it *in toto*. Mr. Soule made an eloquent epeech, acknowledging themselves conquered and appealing to the generosity of the victors. Gen. Butler answered the speech, and step by step forced Mr. Soule to

abandon his objections, and so the Common Council. The Conference began at 8 in the evening and continued through about 2 hours and a half. It broke up pretty amicably. While [this was] going on, the 4th Wisconsin and 2 pieces of artillery keep the street clear and quiet near the hotel and the band discoursed our national airs and others. Some preliminaries not agreed upon when the Conference ended are to be settled at 11 tomorrow morning.

May 3. City perfectly orderly and quiet last night, a good many shops open this morning; the crowd in the streets greatly diminished in numbers and not so sullen; insulting and jeering remarks at Yankees and Bull Run almost entirely abandoned. Sentinels are ordered to enter the crowd and seize and turn over to the Guard all such persons to be put at hard labor at Fort Jackson. From the beginning I have felt perfectly easy about the mob, and thus far have gone about the city as my business required without further precaution than to have one or two of my staff with me. The densest crowd has invariably opened for me to pass. "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just." Thus do I feel, and I believe thus do we all feel. The rebel forces under General Lovell, six or seven thousand, who abandoned the city on our entering it, are encamped 70 miles from New Orleans north, on the New Orleans and Great Northern R. Road, passing through Jackson, Memphis, etc. We ought to have here 50,000 men to act from here in conjunction with Gen'l's Halleck and Buell. I hope the Gov't will recognize the importance of our position, and make the best of it. An officer is going from this to Washington to urge this.

I understand some of the principal rebels say that they mean to try another great battle in the valley of the Mississippi, and if they fail, give up and abandon the war. So mote it be. I pray daily for the success of our country's arms and councils.

May 5. I expected to have made a movement with my brigade ere this, but our limited transportation prevents. The truth is, I do not think it prudent to make detachments from our limited force. The city, indeed, is apparently in subjection, but a force of 6500 men is not in excess, for the object of keeping so large a disaffected population as this in order. Disaffected, I say. Disaffection against the Gov't of the United States is almost universal. One has to see to believe. Secession stares us in the face from every face—from infancy to old age. The girls and women even (the angels) look secession. A shop door here and there only open, and sometimes we have even to take by force and then to pay. Such is the reluctance of people who live by selling to sell to us. The other day all the printing offices refused to print Gen. Butler's proclamation. I called for printers from the reg'ts, sent a guard with them to the office of the *True Delta* and had the Proclamation printed. Gradually, however, they must relax. Their interest and their comfort will constrain them. But there will never be any love for the Union—not in our generation.

May 5. Later in the day.

Shops are beginning to open: well dressed people are beginning to show themselves in the streets: crowds of the vulgar are less numerous and less frequent. To outsiders and insiders, in respectful and apparently contented silence, the band of the 4th Wisconsin this evening discoursed waltzes and marches and songs, on the portico of the St. Charles Hotel.

News of an important character is daily looked for from the army before Richmond. We have rumours of every sort from several directions. But I know that rumours, even here, in the hot bed of secession, recounting rebel success, are regard[ed] with great distrust by rebels themselves. They are despondent, say they're beaten but not subdued. I cannot account for the signal and wonderful passing of the Forts on the Mississippi by the Fleet with the utterly inconsiderable loss of life, but by regarding it as the work of Providence. No other view will account for the success. I look confidently to His aid in the future, and believe He has made our cause His cause.

May 6. You can hardly guess how expensive the most ordinary board is now here. Provisions are enormously high. Mutton 65 cents a pound, flour at \$50 a barrel—not to be had indeed. The poor, as you may imagine, greatly distressed. Yesterday my dinner and a cup of coffee at night cost \$6.00. But, happily, prices must soon come down, permission having been given by Gen. Butler to bring flour from Mobile and cattle from the Red River. Coffee without milk 25 cents a cup. I'm ashamed of being compelled to squander my money for the mere privilege of *eating*. I think this is cheating you and our babies. Well it cannot and must not continue many days, for as a last resort, I can and will take to the soldier's ration.

May 7, 12 M. A mail leaves probably in a few hours direct for N. York, and in the midst of preparation for an expected move with two reg'ts of my brigade up the river, I write to close this letter giving one day's later tidings. More shops open today than yesterday, more of an air of business in the hitherto deserted streets. Yet we do not deceive ourselves by thinking that this place can be held for the Union except by military force. There is no Union feeling in all New Orleans.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER 3 miles below Vicksburg,
Steam Transport *Laurel Hill*. May 22, 1862.

Here we are:—some ½ doz gunboats and flag officer Farragut; and two of my reg'ts and a battery of artillery contemplating this focus of Secession, Vicksburg, with its high bluffs crowned with batteries and its show of rebel troops.

My force is an independent though co-operating force. But our combined force, though equal to a profitable diversion in behalf of our army at Corinth is unequal to the capture and holding of Vicksburg. Instead of 2000 men, I ought to have at least 10,000. But I have all Gen. Butler could afford to spare from the holding of New Orleans with its numerous and hostile population. There's been a little firing of cannon and a little skirmishing with infantry, but nothing of importance.

The Flag-officer may damage the rebel batteries and demolish the town with his big guns, but our forces combined can neither capture nor hold it if captured. For with their 8 or 10 thousand and Jackson an hour by rail away with forces in reserve, our 2000 have to consider discretion the better part of valor. It's provoking, isn't it?

So I think, operations here, until a competent land force can be brought forward, and until the river between this and Memphis is cleared out by Foote's gunboats and Halleck's and Buell's forces, must be limited to a diversion and blockade. A diversion, by compelling Beauregard to keep a large force here, and thus relieve our army near

Corinth of so much rebel force, and a blockade of the river from Vicksburg down to New Orleans, cutting off supplies of food, as flour, corn, beef cattle, etc., drawn by the rebel army from the corresponding country on the west of the Miss. You cannot conceive the flooded condition of the country on both banks of the Mississippi. Water 5 and more feet over the levees. Utter destruction to cotton and other crops. Destruction to cattle and property. Houses almost submerged, abandoned by their inhabitants. One wide desolation, with here and there a spot only above water from here to New Orleans. So I'm told it is above Vicksburg, and yet the June rise of water is to come. War, with all its losses can hardly be worse for starvation and misery. Poor Arkansas is largely flooded of course, your rebel State. What a state for a loyal woman to have been nurtured in. And the blackies, they swarm wherever there's a dry spot to stand on, and wave us a welcome with their hats, and grin their delight at the hope we've come to free them. Skiffs bearing them away from their masters are constantly met with floating down the river. Where they can go and how they can subsist is hard to say. But many must eventually escape and be otherwise lost by starvation to their masters.

These fanatic slaveholders, the counterparts of our abolition fanatics, have thrown overboard, in throwing off their allegiance to the Gov't of the United States, the only protection to their slave property. A party of these slaveholding gentlemen called on me the other day to ask if we would not assist them to recover their slaves. I answered it was a singular request to ask assistance from an authority they had repudiated; going on to say, that I did not doubt, that if they could convince Gen. Butler of their loyalty to the Union, he might help them, not by the employment of force, but by the moral weight of his declaration, that the slave property of loyal inhabitants was entitled to all the protection and guarantees promised in the Constitution of the United States. These secession people must see that their principles lead to nothing but loss and ruin, and yet they appear to be as enamoured of Secession, as if she promised them every good. Strange madness! Calamity, I fear, is the only thing that can restore them to their senses. We have no news here from Corinth. Vague rumours and occasional unreliable secession newspaper statements only. We're as much out of the world here with the river closed above us, and infrequent communication with New Orleans, itself so far from all that interest home, as we would be at the north pole. God grant that the scourge of war which desolates the land may soon end, chastising us as a nation, into the virtue and the religion we have so widely departed from. We must be chastised into reverence for law and order, reverence for right and the fear of God.

BATON ROUGE, LA., June 2, 1862.

I write with constant interruptions, applications of all kinds. It's a court martial, rations, guards, pickets, distressed inhabitants wanting passes, others asking for redress of grievances; reports of the advance of the enemy's forces. And so it goes, affording little time for the most necessary and most ordinary processes of eating and sleeping.

We are here in the capital of the State of Louisiana. It's a pretty town, and an old town, prettily situated. I have quartered one reg't in the State House, a beautiful building with terraced grounds bordered with trees and flowers. In the rotunda of the State House stands a

life size statue of Washington, by the sculptor Powers. And a sentinel has, by my orders, been placed over it to stand watch and ward night and day.

Within this building are the houses of the legislature, Senate and Representatives; the libraries and archives of the State. In the Senate Chamber, to the right and left of the Speaker's chair hang two fine portraits, one of Washington as President, and one of Gen. Taylor as President. All these things will be guarded by our troops with scrupulous care.

I must tell you what the papers may give you a wrong version of, or in some way excite your apprehensions for my personal safety. My aid de camp Lt. DeKay was severely and it is feared fatally wounded in a skirmish on the evening of the 26th of May, at a place called Grand Gulf, on the east bank of the Mississippi, some 50 miles below Vicksburg. As we passed down the river, a rebel battery of four field pieces concealed by the trees opened upon our transport striking the boat repeatedly, and sending the shot through our crowds of men. Most providentially one man only was killed and an officer wounded. Such an escape as it was, was indeed marvellous. Well, we put our boats about and returned to chastise the vagrants. Our escort, two gunboats and a sloop of war, proceeded to the point whence the fire came, opening some of their guns on the place of the battery, and afterwards on the town near by, supposed to be in league with the attacking party. Soon white flags went up in all directions, and I sent a detachment of four companies to capture the battery and their camp. Mr. DeKay applied to accompany the detachment. Arriving on the ground, the enemy was found to have decamped with their guns and tents, the last just leaving. Our people pursued them, skirmishing as they went. Lieut. DeKay very incautiously, but very gallantly, had gotten in advance of the advance guard, and, without his suspicion or knowledge, had gotten within 15 paces of a rebel, whom in the twilight he took to be one of our own people. The rebel turned upon him, levelled his piece and shot him. Seven buck shot struck his left arm at or near the elbow, and five entered his left side and back. Poor fellow, he lies bleeding profusely, and his lower limbs entirely paralyzed. Fatally, I'm afraid, he is wounded. I have just sent him north, that is, I have sent him to New Orleans to go north at the first opportunity, which will probably be in a day or two. I have written to his mother at Newport, Rhode Island, and to his uncle, Charles Augustus Davis in New York.

Mr. DeKay will steam direct to New York; look out for his arrival. Poor fellow, I'm afraid he'll not survive to reach his destination. Poor fellow, he was gallant enough and his generous qualities had endeared him to us all. I shall miss him greatly, socially and officially. I pray for his restoration to health, and shall keep his place open for him.

BATON ROUGE, LA., June 11, 1862.

I was at dinner when Capt. Hoffman came in with the mail. You mention Banks' falling back, but not the rumored disaster to Gen. McClellan's army. The latter came to us here through rebel sources, I don't believe [it]. There may have been a repulse. Repulses are not uncommon in great siege operations. There were many in the War of the Crimea before Sevastopol, but the end at last came. So—let us hope we shall have a victorious ending. Let us ask God to help us, and then we shall prevail.

June 13. Rumours of disaster come to us from Richmond. I don't believe them. The people here with all their sympathies in favor of rebellion do believe, and I suppose, in secret rejoice.

From above we have rumours of the abandonment of Fort Pillow and the falling back of Beauregard from Corinth to Colona in Alabama some 30 miles, with the loss of a million's worth of provisions. Rumours also say that in a great gunboat engagement Foote has again signally prevailed. Vicksburg is being fortified and strongly armed, and several points, bluffs, between this and Vicksburg are or are to be fortified, so that going from this to Vicksburg will involve partial engagements from point to point between our gunboats, and troops perhaps, and the rebel defences. Flag-officer Farragut is now lying off this place with several vessels of the fleet, and awaiting Butler's mortar vessels before ascending the river to attempt the reduction of Vicksburg, and thence go on to join or meet Commodore Foote.

A land force is designed to cooperate with flag-officer Farragut from Gen. Butler's division, and it is probable I shall have command of that force. What it may be enabled to do cannot be foreseen for owing to the flooded condition of the country, some 30 miles below Vicksburg, there are few places where troops can be landed, or where they can be used.

Should, however, the rumoured great disaster to McClellan's army prove true, it's likely that Gen'l Butler will not deem it prudent to spare any troops (from his really small force for the task of keeping in subjection so large and disaffected a city as New Orleans) to cooperate with Flag-officer Farragut in the reduction of Vicksburg. Then the Flag-officer will probably simply run by Vicksburg and meet Commodore Foote and come down with him, and then try their hand at Vicksburg with any land force it may be practicable to detach from Gen. Halleck or Gen. Butler.

One can hardly imagine that these people of Louisiana ever had any attachment for the Union. Here and there a man who acknowledges Union sentiments with his face averted, and in a whisper, for less often do we find a woman: on the contrary, for the most part almost violent, threatening to spit in the faces of union officers. Such venom one must see to believe. Such unsexing was hardly ever before in any cause or country so marked and so universal. I look at them and think of fallen angels.

By the way, a rumour we cannot trace says we have Richmond. I should incline to believe this with all my confidence in McClellan's skill and the excellence imputed to his army. But there are some bright spots even with war all around us with its ever changing phases of success and disaster. There is a bright spot to me on the banks of the Hudson. Wife and children, and a home consecrated to the amenities and charities of Christian life. Loving hearts that shelter and watch over wife and little ones.

June 14. Mr. Whitney, a former Massachusetts man, but long resident in this country, reports at HdQrs this morning the surrender of Memphis to Capt. Davis, and the destruction by Davis of the rebel fleet of gun boats in sight of the population of Memphis. So now Davis and his fleet may get to Vicksburg before Flag Officer Farragut and myself. There are now no obstacles between Memphis and Vicksburg to keep back Davis except 400 miles of steaming, with the current

to assist the steam. The flag officer and myself are impatient to get off and have a hand in opening the navigation of the Father of Waters.

What an extraordinary somersault the *London Times* has lately executed on the subject of the military power of the United States! The last *Times* speaks of Mr. Lincoln as wielding more power than the first Napoleon did, and that if the whole British army were sent to New York, it would be lost in the great armies of the Union, and that all the British fleet could not add to the sufficiency for all purposes of war, of our own. What a somersault! The end must be at hand when John Bull's representative newspaper talks in this way.

June 15. Went to Church with Capt. Hoffman (Dr. Gurlo's Church, Episcopal), and took the Sacrament, asking the Blessing of God on my efforts to save my country.

BATON ROUGE, June 16, 1862.

In a separate command and in a factious city, I'm not only a military commander, but necessarily an administrator of civil affairs, judge, court and jury in more cases than I would wish to be, if I could choose. My time is more cut up even than yours with our daughter on your knee. Such a whirl of solicitation, remonstrance and enquiry I never expected to be a martyr to. I've hardly a moment to myself, really the servant of the public. Here's a guerrilla case of joint stock property with an innocent, inoffensive man. The guerilla's property is confiscated and destroyed, how are we to shield the inoffensive partner? It Can't be done. These claims must be deferred, until peace comes, for the action of Congress. All sorts of complications: a rebel rents land of a widow, owes her for rent. His property was confiscated and the widow exhibits the articles of agreement, and shows the indebtedness by regular account. She asks for a cow in part payment. And I order the officer in charge of the property to give her a cow. The cow was among the oxen, and mules and cows of which the guerilla rebel was dispossessed, etc., etc.

A financial case comes up. Certain parties representing the city corporation had issued small bills redeemable in confederate notes. Confederate notes are proscribed, and the Mayor and council call to ask what they shall do. Small bills are required for circulation:—there's no other way. Without these bills of the corporation no one can buy his marketing. I say, "Call a meeting of the council and call in all small notes they have issued redeemable in Confederate paper, and issue a corresponding sum pledging the property and faith of the city for their redemption", and so forth.

June 17. Flag officer Farragut and Capt. Bell, his fleet Captain, dined with us today. Capt. Bell tells me that his wife and family reside in Newburgh, and that he's going to write his wife that you live in the same town. He's a North Carolinian, and highly loyal. Hardly through my tea, when a case was presented by a man (clergyman), whose horses and mules had been seized by one of my officers on the ground of connection with the guerillas. He came this afternoon and complained, averring that he had nothing to do with the rebellion in any way, and had from the beginning preached against it from his pulpit. I told him to call this evening and meet the officer in my presence, that I might do him justice after a full hearing of both sides. The officer came and told a pretty hard and connected story in direct contradiction to the preacher's assertions, *viz.*: that he had counselled his flock to rise

against the invaders, and if with no other arms, like Samson to slay with the jawbone of an ass. The preacher did not meet with us according to appointment, and so his horses and mules are still retained. These people are strangely bitter, and many forbearing men on our side, Northern and Southern loyalists, think leniency is all a mistake, but that the rebellionists must be chastized into loyalty.

June 18. A visit just now from a lady and her husband about a valuable mulatto run away from them. I told the lady to stop the war and all such troubles would cease, that Southern women had done so much to bring about this war, and they must now do as much to end it. The lady smiled and went on her way—pondering seriously.

June 19, 6 P. M. William is packing bedding, mess effects, etc., etc., for a start. I shall embark about 7, bound for Memphis perhaps, or to meet Capt. Davis and gunboats perhaps no higher up than Vicksburg. Flag-officer Farragut and myself are to co-operate.

My Flagship is the *Louisiana Belle*, a small steamer on which I embark with my staff only. I have some 8 river steamers besides for four regiments and nearly two whole batteries of field artillery. The strength of the four regts and the art'y will be about 3200 men. People, who pretend to be knowing and wise, say we'll meet with no opposition at Vicksburg. I leave about 1200 men, and 5 guns, here for the protection of the place, Gov't stores and buildings. Rumors that the place is to be attacked when I leave are not credited by me.

Flag Ship *Hartford*, MISSISSIPPI RIVER, just above Vicksburg,

June 28, [18]62.

I arrived just below Vicksburg from Baton Rouge, June 25 and commenced on the 27th to cut off by a canal the bend opposite Vicksburg. It's a great work and not of certain execution, for the river is falling rapidly. If the canal succeeds, Vicksburg is cut off and the Mississippi river turned, and Vicksburg and its defences and batteries are conquered by the shovel.

This morning at 4 o'clock, the fleet under Flag officer Farragut attacked the batteries at Vicksburg, and after many hours firing passed the batteries without reducing them. Seven vessels passed the batteries, and all the mortar vessels, and some 5 gunboats remained behind. I had a battery of 8 guns established to assist the (Navy), who did admirably. My force of 3300 was inadequate to storming the batteries, and we are awaiting reinforcements from Gen. Halleck, who is reported to be at Memphis with 80,000 men. The Vicksburgers are well fortified and have from 15 to 20 thousand men. How did I get here? I crossed over on horseback from my camp, made signal for a boat which came, and I've just dined with Flag officer.

The proposed cut off is 4 miles from Vicksburg. If the cut succeeds, the Mississippi will take the course of the cut off and Vicksburg becomes an inland town with a mere creek in front of it. So the batteries will be made useless, and Vicksburg will fall with the spade.

Flagship *Hartford*, JUST ABOVE VICKSBURG, July 2, 1862.

Here I am again having again crossed the bend, on horseback, to confer with Flag-officer Farragut, and this time also with Flag-officer Davis who arrived here from Memphis yesterday. The great part of both fleets is now just above Vicksburg—in a short two miles—and are

yet awaiting events. We hope for the arrival of a considerable force from above, but in the mean time are busy in our own way. The navy mortar vessels firing shells from time to time, and our own field guns held ready for use when the moment arrives for using them to the best advantage. But also the land forces are engaged in a cut off canal, which if successful, will beyond all doubt capture Vicksburg. And we hope largely for success, not withstanding the rapid falling of the river. I have upwards of 700 contrabands employed on the work, which have been taken by my armed parties from the plantations, 3 to 5 miles around. They work and shout as they work, thinking they're working for their freedom, and if the canal is a success will deserve it and shall have it.

The weather has been oppressively warm, but the last two days have been overcast and comparatively cool. Much advantage this to our fellows who have to delve and dig on the canal. The contrabands, on the contrary, flourish and glisten and shine most when the sun's the hottest. And long may they flourish, if the cut off's a success.

In these days we're looking for the great battle at Richmond, the battle of the war and which is to end the war. Desperate will be the fray: twice desperate to those who have everything to lose by defeat. But success on our side is hardly less necessary, and that soon. For the crowds of the spinning mills at Manchester crying for bread is a strong motive for intervention by Mr. Bull, and the loss of import trade a strong motive for intervention to Louis Nap'l'n. A great battle won by us at Richmond, and there'll not be the shadow of a southern Confederacy left to intervene for. This success is our hope, and no doubt the hope and determination of the army before Richmond. We have a Chicago paper of the 27th of June, nothing conclusive in it, but that the great battle has not yet taken place, but was in expectancy. Capt. Davis tells me he has learned from the newspapers that McClellan had established his first parallel, the rebels not having been able to prevent it. If so, it is the beginning of the chapter which is to record the capture of the rebel capital. For, if they could not prevent the establishing of our first parallel, they will not be able to stop the succeeding works of approach.

July 18, 1862. BELOW VICKSBURG, Louisiana side of river.

We, the navies and myself, that is, the lower Fleet of Flag officer Farragut and the upper Fleet of Commodore Davis, and my 2500 are still here blockading Vicksburg. Up to the 11th inst our prospects were promising that the canal we were cutting would succeed in turning the course of the Mississippi and thus cut off Vicksburg from the Mississippi and make it an inland town, and render useless all its guns and great batteries. But alas, on the 11th, the canal caved in at several points and so delayed the work, that the end of three days found us some feet above the level of the river, and the water falling faster than we could dig. Thus we have encountered at least temporary failure after great labor and some anxiety. If not interrupted by the rebels, nor stopped by orders from HdQrs. it is my purpose to cut a real canal, to the depth of the lowest fall of the river, here say 40 to 45 feet, which work will employ 3000 negroes for 3 months. Something of a task, is it not?

But how shall I describe this habitation of ours? It's now afloat and

now ashore; sometimes by land, sometimes by water. Today on board a transport river steamer, tomorrow on land, which two weeks ago was water. Yes, land, now 16 to 18 feet above the river, was 2 months ago 4 feet under the river. Happily the excavation we have made is a mighty ditch, and the earth thrown up a respectable parapet which can be turned to military purposes if necessary.

To vary the monotony of almost daily canonading between the fleet (and sometimes our field batteries) and the rebels, we had unexpectedly, about 8 in the morning of the 15th, a visit from the ram *Arkansas*, an iron clad rebel. She ran through our fleet, receiving their broadsides, not without perceptible injury, and took refuge under the guns of Vicksburg. She is now lying between Commodore Davis' fleet above and Commodore Farragut's fleet below Vicksburg. She came down from the Yazoo River, which enters the Mississippi some 7 miles above Vicksburg. But I will tell the story as it happened.

At 5 in the morning of July 5th, two of our gun boats of Commodore Davis' fleet, and a ram of Col. Ellett's fleet of army rams, started from the upper side of the bend opposite Vicksburg to go up the Yazoo River to reconnoiter, to find out about this very ram *Arkansas*, ascertained being built there and nearing completion, and learn what land batteries and land forces protected her, with a view to a joint expedition on my part and the fleet. At 6 whom should they meet but the rebel ram coming down the Yazoo? Well, of course they engaged her, and she returned their fire and kept on. One of our gunboats, the *Carondelet*, an iron clad, kept side by side with her, exchanging broadsides, for at least 5 miles, when a break in her steering apparatus enabled the rebel to leave her behind. And so she came on and on and was on the fleets of Commodore Davis and Farragut before they knew or suspected her vicinity. Unluckily for us (to save coal) none of our steam fleet had steam enough to follow the rebel; so after taking their broadsides with the best grace she could, she passed down and ensconced herself under the guns of Vicksburg. In the night of the 15th Flag officer Farragut came down with the greater part of his fleet, engaged the batteries of the town, and tried to find the ram in order to run her down. But as she is very low in the water, and about the color of the river bank, and the night very dark, the rebel monster could not be seen and so escaped destruction. There she lies in sight of us, and deserters say will try to pass down the river to New Orleans and Mobile, which she will not do unless it happens to be pitch dark: for Commodore Farragut is determined to destroy her in some way or other, no matter at what sacrifice. Should she pass him, he with the fleet will follow and overtake her. I wish the ram was a sheep!

July 20. Sunday morning, everybody, blacks and all, resting from the labors of the week. It's now 15 minutes to 9 A. M. and the thermometer at 90 in the shade. Such hot weather as we have here is seldom experienced anywhere, and what is worse, the drying up of the lately overflowed land gives rise to a malarious atmosphere, which is telling alarmingly on the health of the troops. Nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of my whole force is on the sick list. I have not told you that Mr. DeKay died of his wound June 27th. My remaining A. D. C., Mr. Biddle, left me yesterday to go up the river and home with a fever on him, and my Adj. Gen. Capt. Hoffman is just taken with fever. The navy, too, is suffering dreadfully from disease, and it would not surprise me if the decimation

of troops and sailors by disease did not compel the abandonment of this Expedition until the return of frost and cool weather. A great disappointment this to all concerned. Many of us entertained hopes of accomplishing in the Cutoff something worth suffering for, and as long as that prospect was before us, officers and men kept back disease by the mere force of resolution. But now that the prospect has failed, the disposition is general to give way. In my own case, happily, my health does not give way, but I confess that my hopes to accomplish the object of my part of the Expedition, surrounded as I am by the sick and desponding, sometimes do give way. This morning the commanders of regiments are to meet me at my flagship *Louisiana Belle*, by my own appointment. I shall instruct them to enquire into the causes of disease, and through their surgeons to report upon the means of preventing or at least modifying.

The inhabitants say this season is unusually unhealthy—many sick themselves, and all men women and children look sick—thin, pale spiritless and yellow. A neighboring physician told me this morning that acclimating did not exempt the resident from the ordinary effects of malaria; that the climate appeared to be perfectly impartial between resident and stranger. A delectable habitation indeed. Again, many of our people not on sick report are yet so affected by malaria as to be good for nothing—feeling unequal to any exertion of mind and body. This is the worse phase.

July 21. Still at our usual avocations of entrenching and canalling. The sick report receives its customary addition, and I'm preparing to send all the sick down the river to Baton Rouge, some 1100! But I'm not discouraged. I know these things to be the accustomed accompaniment of war. The troops do not, and therefore despond more or less. But, I feel, that in this crisis of our country's fortunes our country's success or failure, desponding is not the cure—desponding is neither safety nor success.

The Confiscation Act and Emancipation Act of Congress of recent passage must bring the Southerners to their senses, or culminate in their destruction. If the war continues a year longer, I don't see how they're to escape a servile war. The negroes are flying from their masters in all directions, and have become thoroughly impressed with the *idea* of being free. Old, decrepit men and women, even, come into our lines, whose old age and infirmities were probably well provided for. Yet they leave the comforts their age and infirmities require, for freedom, which, may be, has been the dream of all their lives. That idea of being free, how can they ever be dispossessed of it? Never. The doom of slavery is already written, unless the South stop the rebellion. They began the rebellion to establish a great slave empire: they must stop the rebellion to save their country from destruction and servile war, and perhaps themselves from negro domination and a Black Republic. What a terrible punishment!

This is my third letter by the up river route. We cross the bend opposite Vicksburg by land, and thus communicate with the up river fleet, and get mails from Memphis and St. Louis.

It seems to be my good or bad fortune to get into the newspapers and get more abuse than praise. I hope it may be my really good fortune to do something to silence all slander and slanderers. We have corrupt combinations—old party combinations—in our volunteer forces

Bad, unscrupulous men. But they cannot prevail. The truth must beat them thousand to one.

I believe it is the intention of the fleet to attempt the destruction of the ram this afternoon. She must be destroyed, or we cannot maintain our supremacy on the Mississippi. If destroyed, I may go to Baton Rouge, unless the force with me be necessary to holding this point of land opposite Vicksburg I now hold. My only doubt about the propriety of remaining is whether it will be possible to keep troops here during the more sickly months of August and September. Nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ of my present force are unfit for duty now.

BELOW VICKSBURG, in sight of the town, the batteries, and the Ram,
July 21, 1862.

*To Mrs. M. A. Bailey.*²

Is every body abused in the newspapers as well as I am? My hope and prayer is to be permitted to achieve something to silence all slander and all slanderers. Our country and ourselves are in other hands, let us hope, than those of party politicians and corrupt men:—corrupt combinations, who seek to effect their own schemes in our volunteer army as they have hitherto in civil life.

It is impossible slander should succeed against truth and virtue. It is impossible the corrupt should prevail over the upright.

I've been here since June 29, trying to cut off Vicksburg by a canal across the bend opposite. On July 11, the bottom of our ditch was $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet below the Mississippi, and we should have opened it for the water, but for a slide or cave in which delayed so in removing it, that when it was done, the river had fallen some three feet below the grade of the canal's bottom, and was falling faster than we could dig with our 1500 contrabands. Well, what am I doing now? Waiting for land forces from above to take Vicksburg with, say 15,000. I have written twice to Gen. Grant. Commodore Farragut has written to Gen. Halleck. From the latter has come an answer he had no troops to spare: from the former I have not heard. Gen. Butler cannot spare any troops from New Orleans.

Next, what am I doing? I have begun a new canal it will take three months to finish with good management and good luck. But already I've been obliged to divert a portion of my laboring force to convert the canal already cut into a defensive work, for Rumour says the rebels are going to try to interrupt the work by land attack. Not unlikely at all, if our fleet does not destroy their ram. Then, I'm embarrassed by the excessive number of sick in my fighting force. Twelve hundred on the sick list, some eight hundred others about, unequal from the effects of malaria to any vigorous exertion of mind or body. On paper, my force numbers some 3000, in fact, for service, it is doubtful if under the greatest emergency, I could get together 1000 men able to fight for hours and march a dozen miles. This is a dilemma, is it not?

Commodore Farragut and fleet has received orders to go down the river to New Orleans. I am cooperating with him. Commodore Davis and fleet are on the opposite side of the bend above Vicksburg. The latter are to remain in charge of the river. Part of Davis' fleet will have to occupy both sides of the bend, and communicate by land, $1\frac{1}{4}$

² The writer's wife's mother.

miles across the bend, with each other. They ought to have a railroad track, which it is quite possible to make out of the rails from the Vicksburg, Shreveport and Texas rail road which runs through our midst. I'm so anxious to do something useful, that I've half a mind to undertake the work, notwithstanding my alarmingly large and fast increasing sick list, and my desire and prayer to win, if we have to fight. So we go! The country's circumstances require everything, every energy to carry it safely through the war.

But emancipation and confiscation must do much to end the war. Or what can the south expect but a servile insurrection! If the war continues a year longer, nothing can save them from it. The idea of freedom has possessed itself of the entire black population, and what idea of this sort ever failed to work itself out? The old and decrepit are not exempt from it, and leave the comforts age and infirmity require for freedom. Here they are in our lines, old, young; men, women; boys, girls; rampant with the idea of being free, look and speak defiantly to their quondam masters.

Yes, a year's longer war, and negro slavery is doomed forever. And they whose ambition led them to attempt the foundation of a great slave empire are in danger of domination by the former slave, under the terrors and humiliations of perhaps a Black Republic! How Providence works let no man pretend to say. But this looks like retribution.

BATON ROUGE, July 26.

To Mrs. M. N. Williams.

Ten precious letters from May 31 to July 2 met me on my arrival from Vicksburg today. One envelope contains a missive of announcement and congratulation with a lock of hair from baby, by Cousin P. and a special announcement from you.

My transports came down convoyed by all of Commodore Farragut's fleet, expecting to have to run a gauntlet of art'y and musketry all the way through. But to our surprise and greater comfort not a shot was fired, because they saw us so well prepared to return their fire.

Rumours have been various and rife of the enemy's intentions on Baton Rouge. At one time 15,000 men reported to be within 8 miles. My force which came down the river has augmented the force here, more numerically than effectively, on account of the great number of sick. But still, to all here, its arrival must be comforting.

I confess I'm glad to get back from swamps and malaria to something civilized in aspect and civilized in fact. We, the army, have some good friends and courteous here, people too humane to encourage civil war, and too much attached to the Union to aid its enemies by their money or services. Yet there is that *Conscription* which thousands would evade if they could and thousands are contributing to against their will. Yes, that Conscription which makes the war the cause of the South, by bringing by force every southern man capable of bearing arms into the war. And, once in arms, it matters little how they get there, they will according to all experience on the subject fight as well as conscripts as they would as volunteers—yea better. For, as conscripts, the only relation between the private in the ranks and the officer is a purely official relation, which exacts discipline and compels instruction without fear, favor or affection. This result is not attainable with volunteers, raised and brought into service as ours are, with

their political and party connections retained in full force—their hopes of preferment to civil office urging them to be popular rather than faithful, holding out the prospect of advancement to the man who neglects his duty most—the demagogue who is trying to serve himself rather than his country.

I am not mistaken in my assertion that we ought to adopt the conscription, and then we may count on beating down rebellion and restoring the union. Our volunteer system is radically bad, and must be set aside, and the sooner set aside the better. This is the truth, and in this crisis of our country nothing but the truth will save us. Lying politicians and lying newspapers have brought the country to its present extremity. Brave and true men only will save it. Let us be true to our country, and true to ourselves, then may we, with hope that we shall be heard, ask God to help us.

While writing this, I'm interrupted by a shining, ebony face and profound salutation, in a little voluble man who calls himself Baptiste Charles. Baptiste Charles has a large watermelon in both hands which he comes to present to me—which I persuade Charles to accept a quarter of a dollar for. Charles asserts his loyalty to the north and proclaims the secession sentiments of his master. I do not discuss Constitutional questions with Baptiste Charles, but tell him his melon is an uncommonly fine one, and that if he has cantelopes or figs, or fruit or eggs, or vegetables of any sort to sell, to bring them in. Charles bows profoundly, for be it remembered that Charles is a French negro, and has the politeness of that nation.

July 27, Sunday. Good bye, my own wife. Love to Cousins. Kisses to J. M. S. and X.³

[This concludes the letters. There was probably no further opportunity to send, if there had been leisure to write. The enemy's advance was known, and there was disaffection in the city. The good-bye written July 27 was a last one. G. M. W.]

³ General Williams's youngest son was born June 28, 1861.